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"MY MOTHERLAND" SERIES XE NO. 26

PROFESSOR KARVE AND HIS LIFE WORK

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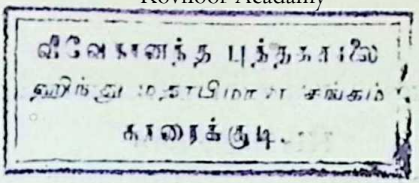

PROFESSOR KARVE AND HIS LIFE-WORK

Introduction.

Prof. Karve is one of the greatest revolutionaries and makers of history in India. I have used the word 'revolutionaries' not in a bad sense but in a sense that he has brought about a great upheaval in the tendencies of the society with regard to the question of Women's Education. No doubt he was able to do this work, because he got the opportunities. But certainly it requires tact and skill to take advantage of the opportunities offered to us by God. "Had it not been for those opportunities," says Prof. Karve, "which came to me unexpectedly.....I should have been a village school master after the type of Goldsmith's village school master....." But Fate ordained otherwise and this Ordinance of the Fate has been absolutely in the interests of India. One simply looks with a wondering eye and a feeling of great admiration at the marvellous achievement of Prof. Karve. The S. N. D. T. Indian Women's University, which commands respect and attention from every quarter, is his life-work. Those who were deadly opposed to the principles on which the University was founded and consequently adopted an attitude of neglect and contempt are now becoming sympathetic towards it. Prof. Karve never anticipated that he would be so fortunate as to see his long-cherished ideals about the education of women in India come to fruition in his own life-time. But what he never anticipated, has now become an established fact and today it can be definitely said that Prof. Karve is equal to Indian Women's University.

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His Early Life

But before entering into the fascinating history of this novel experiment, it would be interesting to have a glance at the life of Prof. Karve, which would serve as a guide to posterity and would be an inspiration to any young man who sincerely desires to do some substantial constructive work for his conntry. Prof. Karve was born of a very respectable family on 17th May 1858 at Sherivali in Khed Taluka of the Ratnagiri District. He has fully inherited in him all his mother's religiousness and charity. When very young, he unfortunately lost his father. Formerly the Karve family was very rich. But by the time of Prof. Karve's father, it had been stricken with poverty. Consequently, Prof. Karve had to carry on his education partly relying upon his scholarships and partly on his private tuitions. He passed his Matriculation Examination in 1881 standing 16th in the list and graduated himself in the year 1885. In his student-life, he did many deeds of public charity or public spirit. After he passed his B. A. Examination, he settled down to the life of a teacher in Bombay. He was married at 15 to a girl in his own village. Up to this time, there was nothing exceptional in his life which could have foretold his future greatness. On the contrary, the only notable thing in his life was his shyness, the one uncurable defect in him, on account of which he had to undergo many inconveniences even at the cost of his prestige.

A Turning Point

While he was passing the life of a teacher in Bombay, he received a letter from Mr. G. K. Gokhale offering him the post of a Professor of Mathematics in the Fergusson College. It was a happy surprise for him. He accepted the offer and came to Poona to cast his lot with the Life-Members of the Fergusson College. He disposed of his duties quite satisfactorily and the Board of Life-Members and the

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Governing Body have spoken very highly of him. When he moved to Poona to join the Fergusson College, his first wife died. He had all along been thinking about the condition of the widows in our Society, and was moved to compassion by the lamentable condition of the widows who were—and are to some extent even now—treated with dire disgrace and contempt for no fault of their own. He, therefore, determined to marry a widow, if at all he was to marry again. He is of opinion that those widows who wish to remain unmarried for some noble cause, should, by all means, do so. But this supreme sacrifice should not be expected from all, when even old men dared to marry girls of tender age. Men and women should be judged by the same standard of morality and as a practical course he recommended that widowers should marry only widows. Prof. Karve is not merely a man of words. He did not shirk the responsibility of action when time came, and in accordance with his confirmed opinions, married a widow. This was a testing time and also a turning point in his life.

Marrying a widow has become a comparatively simpler thing now-a-days; but it was a very bold step on his part at that time, when orthodoxy was at its zenith. It required a great moral courage. It was a daring attack on the old and strong citadel of orthodoxy. He had to withstand the very dangerous weapon of social boycott put on him by Gawaki (Villagers' Committee). He was not allowed to see his mother, sister and brother. This very much pained him. He had thus to go through a very fiery ordeal. But he came out successful. Ultimately the storm subsided and all went on quite well. He faced all the criticisms in the newspapers very calmly and never caused any bitterness of feeling in Society by unnecessarily wounding their susceptibilities. Persuasion and not rash attacks on Society, is the policy followed by him.

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The Hindu Widows' Home

Prof. Karve then started the Widow Remarriage Association and carried on propaganda in favour of widow-marriages. He tried to collect funds to help the poor remarried couples. But he soon found that it was very hard to push his programme further owing to public apathy. He realised that to soften the hard lot of the Widows, Education was the only remedy, and with this purpose in view he started the Hindu Widows' Home in 1895 with only two widows in a small house at Poona. It was later on transferred to its present site at Hingne. It was first working under the Widow Remarriage Association; but was made independent of its control so that the public may not be prejudiced against the Home which was intended to be purely an educational Body observing strict neutrality towards the question of widow-marriages.

Opposition to Women's Education

The problem of educating the women was not also without difficulties. Enlightened people in India are not *now* generally opposed to the education of women. Differences may exist with regard to some details, but all the same education of women is regarded as a matter of national importance. It has been generally recognised, that it is only then when women are educated, that any society can be kept in a well-ordered and harmonious condition. For, as Dr. Smiles puts it, "Men themselves cannot be sound in mind or morals if women be the reverse.....The influence of women is the same everywhere. Her condition influences the morals, manners and character of the people in all countries. Where she is debased, society is debased. Where she is morally pure and enlightened, society will be proportionately elevated. Hence to instruct woman is to instruct man; to elevate her character is to raise his own; to enlarge her mental freedom is to extend and secure that of the whole community. For Nations are but the outcomes of homes and peoples of mothers." We have now more or less realised that the Nation cannot advance any further if the mind and soul of half the population is kept in dark ignorance. But this thing has dawned upon us only now. Some forty years ago it was different. The very idea that women should be educated was

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hateful to the orthodox people. They thought that education of women was an evil; it was disastrous to the well-being of the society. The ideas entertained about women by the people who were avowedly of the conservative tendencies, were that woman was meant 'to be either an unthinking drudge or merely the pretty ornament of man's leisure.' It was held that 'Chemistry enough to keep the pot boiling and Geography enough to know the different rooms in her house, was science enough for women.'

And it was quite natural. For every society is essentially conservative and Indian Society is not an exception to it. Conservative tendencies do not die away very easily and on account of the tendency of the Society to suppose 'what is old, is gold' many new beneficial reforms are seriously handicapped. And this is all the more true with regard to social matters. When the question of introducing any new reforms comes before the public for discussion, the orthodox diehards vehemently oppose it and cry from the housetops that the reforms are ruinous to the society and would make its condition topsy-turvy. Owing to this diehard opposition Women's Education has been woefully neglected and it has taxed the utmost energy and patience of the social reformers to convince the public that 'woman exists for herself as well as for others and the serious and responsible duties she is called upon to perform in life require the cultivated head as well as the sympathising heart,' and that the Indian Nation cannot make any real progress unless our women are properly equipped with education.

Owing to this state of things, the Widows' Home started by Prof. Karve could make only slow progress. But by his ceaseless efforts and sweet reasonableness, Prof. Karve convinced the public of the utility of women's education and as a result the Widows' Home that started its work with only a couple of students at Hingne in a small hut had by 1915 grown into a typical boarding school for women.

Origin of the University.

But Prof. Karve's work did not stop here. Merely the development of a Boarding School for women was not his ideal. Being fired with the exalted ambition of doing something more for the welfare and progress of our women, he was

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not content with the work he had done so far in the cause of Indian women. He thought the Widows' Home insufficient for his activities. This is, in fact, the nature of every honest and sincere patriot. He is free from the fault of self-assertion and is not satisfied with the work he does but always looks on for more. Prof. Karve was always aware of the fact that to raise the status of women in society, something more must be done.

The Hindu Widows' Home was still a private and an independent Institution and had not fixed its goal, when "apparently a small thing occurred that changed the prospects before the Widows' Home and it decided to launch forth an ambitious scheme of the Women's University."

As a practical educationist, Prof. Karve was quite aware of the difficulties that lay in the advance of our women. He saw that the time at the disposal of an average Indian girl 'for mastering the courses of studies laid down for boys,' was very small owing to social environments and customs. And besides, these courses were chalked out without taking into consideration the needs and aptitudes of women. Prof. Karve noted that on account of the neglect of the education of women, the gulf between the cultural status of men and women was being widened and it was necessary to bridge the gulf in the least possible time. How was that to be? He realised that the best way to do this was to return to the natural method of educating the women through the medium of vernaculars. It was an irony of fate that in India education was imparted through foreign language, which method unnecessarily wastes the energy of our boys and girls. Fortunately, a pamphlet describing the aims and ideals of the Japan Women's University fell into his hands, in which his ideas found good support and it was the success of the Japan Women's University—it is by now a tremendous success—that flashed before his mind the idea of founding a Women's University in India on the same lines and he gave vent to his thoughts in his Presidential Address at the National Social Conference held in Bombay in December, 1915.

Prof. Karve's nature is such that he a thinks a thousand times before entering any movement. But when his thoughts are matured, he throws himself heart and soul in it. As his ideas took shape he threw himself whole-heartedly in the

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movement with his usual promptitude, confidence and daring spirit. His ideal in founding the Women's University was the same as that of the promoters of the Japan Women's University which was as given below ;

"Our aim in establishing the Women's University is neither to copy the higher institutions for women in America and Europe nor to rival the men's universities in this country. What we aim at is so to frame our schedules of study as to suit the mental and physical conditions of women at present, and to gradually raise the standard in accordance with general progress."

"There is a wide-spread tendency to regard woman merely as a tool or a machine destined solely for service at home and for the propagation of family line : and in opposition to such extreme tendencies' we feel the necessity of educating women as human beings, that we may be able to call forth their consciousness as personalities with infinite aspirations and longings."

"We cannot support another movement which aims at the so-called emancipation of women. In opposition to this tendency, we lay emphasis on home-life as the chief sphere of women's activities. Here her proper place is found as wife and mother, not indeed as a tool or an ornament, but as an active partaker in the humanitarian and national spirit, which should animate a home.....Our aim is to educate women that they shall come to realise their own special mission in life.....They shall be able to perform their services as wives and mothers in a larger sense and more efficient manner than hitherto."

"But at the same time we must remember, there will always be women, who, owing to various reasons, do not marry. To those we must give room for realising their mission in life and utilising their own peculiar personal abilities. We must recognise their sphere of activity as legitimate, and not as existing on sufferance, and their lives as having important missions for the Nation and the Community at large."

"Thus the principles which shall govern us in educating women are : First, to educate them as human beings, personalities ; secondly to educate them as women in order to fit them to become good wives and wise mothers ; and thirdly to

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educate them as members of the Nation so that they may always remember that their lives at home are related in an important manner, however hidden, to the prosperity or decay of the Nation."

Development

Prof. Karve's starting of work in this direction was merely a plunge in the dark ; it was just like speculating in the Cotton Market, as he was neither supported by any substantial financial help, nor by a sufficient number of students ready to take advantage of the new scheme of education propounded by him. His friends, who were pessimistic in the matter, advised him to hasten slowly. But he had confidence in his cause and he rightly thought that God would help him in his undertakings as he firmly believed in the proverb 'God helps those who help themselves.' He had already been supported by the Hindu Widows' Home Association of which the late Dr. Bhandarkar was the Chairman. It was proposed to name the University as 'Maharashtra Women's University' but at the suggestion of some influential leaders in other parts of the country, to make it comprehensive, the name was changed to 'Indian Wemen's University.'

A Provincial Committee consisting of Prof. D. K. Karve, Prof. G. C. Bhate, Prof. H. G. Limaye, Prof. K. R. Kanitkar, Miss Krishnabai Thakur (now Mrs. Saralabai Naik), Mr. N. C. Kelkar and Mr. M. K. Gadgil (Secretary) was formed by the Association and the Scheme was entrusted to them for being worked out. The Committee carried on the work vigorously and in the course of three months and a half brought the University into existence. From April 1916 to June 1916, Prof. Karve travelled all over India on propaganda in favour of his new movement and his efforts bore fruit. He obtained the valuable support of two thousand educated people and in June 1916, the first Senate met with Dr. Bhandarkar as the Chancellor and Dr. R. P. Paranjpye as the Vice-Chancellor. The Constitution was so settled as to make the Senate a thoroughly representative body to manage the affairs of the University.

The Hindu Widows' Home consented to affiliate its High School to the newly started University and also undertook to start and run a College in accordance with its principles

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The first Entrance Examination was held in 1916 and those who came out successful were admitted into this College and the College was opened on 5th July, 1916, with only 5 students and thus the Indian Women's University began its work.

Scheme of Studies and its Special Features.

To check the growing disparity in the education between men and women, Prof. Karve determined to introduce Vernacular as Media of Instruction and that is one of the distinguishing features of the Indian Women's University. It has established that necessary thing on which there are many differences of opinion in the boys' universities. The success of the University lies in the fact that recently the Calcutta University has resolved to follow its footsteps. It would be worthwhile to notice the thoughts in this matter of Babu Ramanand Chatterjee, the veteran journalist of India. He says :

"It requires no argument to prove that a student's mother-tongue is the best medium through which he may be taught ; the thing is self-evident. Owing to education in and through English, a gulf has been created between the educated classes and masses. This has been detrimental to political and social solidarity. Efforts are being made to bridge this gulf between the educated men and uneducated men. In the case of women it would be better to prevent the evil assuming considerable proportions than allowing it to grow and then trying to remedy it."

The objection as regards the text-books has been ably ruled out by him as follows :—

"Text-books can be and are being prepared and technical terms are being coined as necessity arises. And until we have a sufficient number of Vernacular text-books, our teachers and professors, who have sufficient knowledge of English, can in the meanwhile, consult English books and prepare their lecture-notes therefrom. Such up-to-date lectures in Vernaculars are more useful, necessary and important than the use of text-books. It should always be borne in mind that it was not very long ago that English, German, French and other European languages were in the same condition as our Vernacular text-books and technical terminology. It is largely

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because they came to be used more and more for the purpose of high education that these languages have become rich in scientific, historical, philosophical and other literature of information. If we are determined and energetic our Vernacular literature will be gradually rich in these respects."

But while accepting the principle of instruction through Vernaculars, Prof. Karve and his co-workers were alive to the necessity of teaching the English language which serves to keep us up-to-date in all departments of life and therefore it has been introduced in the Courses of Studies as a Compulsory Subject. The promoters of the University have always thought 'that any scheme of education without the inclusion of English as a Compulsory Subject is not in the interests of India.' "But," as Mr. Chatterjee has observed, the Promoters held "that too much time and energy should not be devoted to speaking and writing English as well as Englishmen do. It would do for most of us if we possessed a working knowledge of English as a Second Language. The British Government in India have sometimes employed German, French, Dutch and Norwegian Professors, Archæologists and other experts. They have been able to do their work through the medium of English though they learnt that language in their countries only as a second language. We are not worse linguists than Europeans."

Woman's chief sphere of activity is in her home. She has to beautify it, to adorn it. 'Even in future, if human society is to exist.....one main sphere of work for women will be the family and the home.' And as Dr. Smiles has pertinently observed, 'wherever woman has been withdrawn from her home and family to enter upon other work, the result has been socially disastrous,' and 'for equipping them for such work for the home and the society, they should study some special subjects and receive special training in others,' and therefore subjects such as Domestic Science, Physiology, Elementary Biology, Soliology and Child—Psychology specially suited to the requirements of women were introduced in the Syllabus. A choice is given to students to study different Voluntary Subjects from the Entrance Class. Scope is thus given to all likes and dislikes as well as to the natural bend of the minds of the students. There is room for speciali-

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sation also and a Higher Degree called 'Proficient in Arts' is instituted for post-graduate studies.

The University has also framed a Diploma Course and those Graduates who wish to pursue the life of a teacher may take this Diploma in Teaching.

One of the objects of the University is to make provision for the training of teachers for Primary and Secondary Schools and for this purpose a Training College has been started at Hingne.

Finances of the University

Though Prof. Karve took a leap in the dark, his personal vigorous efforts in addition to the greatness of his cause influenced some noble-minded persons like Mr. M. K. Gadgil who helped the University in its initial stages. Another gift of importance came from Dr, Lande of Jingia. He had only some faint idea of the University. But he was so confident of the justness of Prof. Karve's movement that he did not hesitate to contribute his whole estate worth nearly Rs. 40,000 to the University and his name was commemorated by erecting a Building by name 'The Vithal Raghoba Lande Buildings' for the S. N. D. T. Kanyashala, Poona. This unexpected Gift was certainly an encouragement from God. Then, on 21st June 1920, came the largest gift on certain conditions of Rs. 15,000,00 ever offered to the neglected cause of Women's Education, from the late Sir Vithaldas D. Thackersey. People may realize the importance of the University since a man like Sir Vithaldas was induced to give the above-mentioned munificent donation. The University was to get only the interest (Rs. 52,500) on the sum until either the Charter was obtained or the sum which would buy the Government securities of the face value of Rs. 15,000,00 was collected by the University. He also authorised his Trustees to hand over the corpus of the donation to the University despite the non-fulfilment of the conditions, if the University was progressive and was doing substantial work in the cause of women. He was really a great and a far-sighted man. Besides, the sum of Rs. 10,000 is subscribed annually by the public and nearly an equal amount is collected by Prof. Karve as donations from different persons. Notwithstanding his old age, he toured round the world and also in Africa and brought a sum of about

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Rs. 60,000. The University has got a permanent fund of nearly two lakhs which would have been 4 or 5 lakhs had not the amount been locked up in the Buildings at the initiative of the Late Sir Vithaldas himself.

The Thackersey gift stabilised the University and enlarged its sphere of work. The constitution was settled with the full consent of the Donor and the Management of the University is now vested in the Senate consisting of 80 members (7 Patrons, 18 Graduates, 10 Ladies, 10 General, 20 Electorate of Associations, 5 Thackersey Family and 10 Senate). The wish of the late Sir Vithaldas to give adequate representation to every community was fully carried out.

Progress

In 1916 there was only one College and one High School while in 1932 there are 4 Arts Colleges, 1 Training College and 20 High Schools conducted on the lines laid down by the University. The number of students taking advantage of the education planned out by the University has increased from 863 in High Schools, 39 in Colleges and 16 in Tr. College to 2200, 107 and 32 respectively in 1932. Similarly 32 students appeared at the Entrance in 1924 and 5 only for the G.A. while in 1932 the figures rose to 201 and 23 respectively. Upto now the University has turned out 90 Graduates in Art, 4 Proficients in Art, one student has secured the Diploma in Teaching and 63 students have passed the final year of the Training College. This shows that the method of education devised by the University is slowly but surely attracting the public. In this connection it is particularly to be noted that most of the above schools are managed by the Graduates of the University who are infused with the spirit of sacrifice and social service. They are working on mere maintenance salaries simply with the noble object of spreading education among women. The efforts of these Graduates have been of much use in raising the status of the University which is now rightly occupying the position of an unique Institution working for the women in India and has gone beyond the experimental stage. Two P. A.s had written excellent thesis for the examination which were allowed to be published in book-form. They are certainly noteworthy additions to the Marathi literature.

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Recognitions Enjoyed

The number of Graduates turned out and the number of students studying in all the four Colleges would seem very small. But this is due to the want of recognition by Government to the University Degrees. But it is hoped that parents will look more to the quality of instruction than to the market value of the Degrees. It was not possible to obtain a Charter from the Government, as the Promoters wanted freedom in the framing of the Courses. The University being a novel experiment, the Government was suspicious about its success and hence its attitude was indifferent. But it has now recognised the importance of the University and is becoming sympathetic day by day towards its work. It has been giving grants to some of the University Schools and has given recognition to the Training College Certificates. It is also prepared to allow the Candidates who have passed the Entrance or higher examination to appear for the S.T.C. It is to be hoped now that the University would obtain a Charter from the Government very soon. The College of Physicians and Surgeons, Bombay, have also recognised the Entrance for the L.C.P.S. Course. Some four or five girls have obtained the Degrees from foreign Universities as the G. A. Examination was recognised as equivalent to the B.A. of the Bombay University.

Dark Clouds hanging

In the midst of these happy and encouraging circumstances every one will be sorry to note that dark clouds are hanging heavily over the University. It has pleased the fancy of the Executors of the late Sir Vithaldas to stop paying the interest of Rs. 52,500. Needless to say, this is a most unwise and ill-advised action. No doubt it is creditable to the promoters of the University that they are trying to steer the ship through this terrible storm and it is fervently hoped that it will not founder on the danger-rock. They have accepted 50% cut in their salaries and have made drastic retrenchments in their budget. But no prophet is necessary to predict that the University will have to be closed down if the Authorities are unsuccessful in their attempts to balance the budget, which I am sure, would never be the case.

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It is not my desire to discuss the legal position of either of the Parties. But I must say that "he will take a grave moral responsibility upon himself who will consciously do anything to impede its growth." The Authorities will no doubt be encouraged—and also I hope, the executors will be convineed of the greatness and popularity of the work—at the fact that thousands of rupees are pouring in at the urgent call of Prof. Karve at the preseut time to save the University from destruction. So storng has been the grip of this new scheme on public mind.

Conclusion

Prof. Karve has done as much as lay in his power and will be doing his work without a halt in future. It is to be seen whether the people will adequately respond to him or retain their slave mentality. There had been very few reformers in our unfortunate country with that untiring energy, with that unbending will, with that honesty of purpose which Prof. Karve possesses to an extraordinary degree. His name will have to be given a prominence in the social part of our history in which women's progress in education will have to be recorded.

It is not every century that produces men like Prof. Karve, and if we will not avail ourselves of his services, we will have to repent for it very bitterly in future.

S. G. PENDSE.

THANKS

My hearty thanks are due to Prof. Karve and Dr. Mrs. Iravatibai Karve, the Registrar, for the extreme sympat' y and indulgence shown to me by them, in the absence of which, it would have been impossible for this brochure to see the light of the day.

S. G. P.

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